

OASLC Technical Committee – Recommendation to the OASLC Board regarding Strategic Plan

The Technical Committee (TC) met on August 4, 2015, to review draft sections of an OASLC Strategic Plan and formulate recommendations to the Board. This summary presents the draft plan sections reviewed by the TC (gray-shaded headings), the TC's recommendation for each section (yellow-highlighted headings), and the scope of comments when there were varying views.

TC Meeting Attendance:

Benjamin Pister
Sharon Kim
Scott Gende
Carissa Turner

Heather Coletti
Chris Gabriele
Jennifer Thelan
Linda Chisholm

Laura Sturtz
Rachel Mason
Jan Caulfield (facilitator)

Mission: Add “coastal” to the current OASLC Mission and provide definition/examples of “coastal and marine ecosystems” to clarify the geographic and topical scope of OASLC’s work:

New Mission: “The OASLC is a partnership dedicated to understanding and preserving the coastal and marine ecosystems connecting Alaska’s National Parks through research and education.”

New definition: “Coastal and marine ecosystems” are ecosystems heavily influenced by the ocean. These include bays, fjords, salt water estuaries, intertidal areas, coastal lagoons, brackish areas, and the marine-terrestrial interface; and processes associated with coastal and marine ecosystems, such as physical and chemical processes involving marine waters, and biological population and community processes involving marine birds, mammals, invertebrates, marine and anadromous fish, terrestrial organisms, and humans interacting directly with these ecosystems.

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- TC recommends adding “coastal and” to the Mission statement, as shown above. (Note: One TC member commented that the addition is not necessary, as “marine implies coastal”.)
 - TC supports proposed definition of “coastal and marine ecosystems”, with addition of reference to human interaction with these ecosystems, as shown above. (Note: One TC member commented that the proposed definition is too convoluted.)
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OASLC Focus: Include a Focus Statement in the Strategic Plan, indicating that the OASLC will substantially focus its funding and work on cross cutting issues that affect multiple parks, as determined by the Board:

OASLC will substantially focus on cross cutting coastal/marine science and issues that are relevant to and high priorities for multiple parks and/or the Alaska Region. Cross cutting issues are those that were repeatedly identified by parks, I&M networks and/or external

partners in surveys and meetings during development of the Strategic Plan. These include: ocean acidification, climate change impacts to both natural and cultural resources, marine debris, oil spills, increased shipping and other vessel traffic, invasive species, and the loss of elder knowledge. Many of these issues are interrelated.

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- *TC recommends including this Focus statement. OASLC focus on cross cutting issues shared by multiple parks will be an efficient way to meet shared needs with limited funding and capacity. However, there is also support for reserving some funding and capacity to also address unique coastal park needs. (Note: One TC member commented that if this Focus statement is adopted, information provided by the OASLC would not be sufficiently park-specific.)*
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Strategic Goals: Recommendation that the OASLC Strategic Plan include goals related to three key areas of service:

Goal 1: Coastal/Marine Science Information and Education

Goal 2: Use of Coastal/Marine Science in Park Management

Goal 3: Coastal/Marine Scientific Research and Resource Inventory and Monitoring in Coastal Parks

The OASLC's annual program of work – which will be developed in consultation with the coastal parks, I&M networks and Technical Committee and approved by the Board – will draw from the lists of potential actions below. The actions successfully implemented each year will depend upon funding, capacity, and priorities. Note that some actions may contribute to more than one objective or goal.

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- *TC recommends adoption of the three Goals listed above.*
 - *The TC emphasized that the OASLC must coordinate with the regional ocean and coastal program coordinator and regional science communicator, as appropriate, in accomplishing the actions included in the Strategic Plan.*
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Goal 1: Coastal/Marine Science Information and Education – Increase coastal/marine science literacy of NPS personnel, partners, students and other key audiences

Objective 1-1: Support NPS personnel capacity to educate the public and key audiences about coastal/marine science relevant to Alaska's coastal parks, including results of scientific research, inventory and monitoring work conducted in the park areas.

Actions could include:

- Disseminate quarterly research summaries on cross cutting issues for NPS personnel. Include research conducted by NPS and other entities.

- Train seasonal personnel in coastal/marine issues and science relevant to coastal parks.
- Distribute resource briefs and web articles regarding current coastal and marine research projects and results to NPS personnel.

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- *TC recommends Objective 1-1 and actions as drafted above.*
- *It was clarified at the TC meeting that park staff would not be burdened in creation of these types of products – OASLC or other regional science staff would create products to benefit the park staff.*

Objective 1-2: Develop and deliver, and support parks (RM and I&E divisions) in developing **outreach and education information and products** regarding coastal/marine science relevant to Alaska's coastal parks, including results of scientific research, inventory and monitoring work conducted in the parks.

Actions could include:

- Support RM staff in documenting projects and distributing research results, especially to lay audiences.
- Consult with parks and researchers on effective outreach/education components of research projects and in development of communication products associated with research in the parks.
- Support I&E staff with the inclusion of quality scientific content in interpretation efforts.
 - Assist existing staff in the development of communication products, using contracts and external sources as necessary.
 - Assist in development of video products. Contract out additional video development when OASLC staff lacks the capacity to assist.
 - Expand media intern opportunities where parks can provide necessary support (e.g., supervision and housing). Recruit from other programs beyond Central Michigan University and include internship in scientific writing in addition to photography and video.
 - Develop resource briefs and web articles regarding current coastal and marine research projects and results.
- Use – and support parks in using – social media, web content, etc., to focus on scientific messages and dissemination of information about science conducted in the coastal parks.
- Leverage other government agency science communication efforts to communicate science and scientific results relating to parks – examples of agencies include: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC), Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS), and US Geological Survey (USGS).
- Enhance scientific communication between coastal parks and local communities with strong ties to park units or park resources, and with other local audiences, such as through workshops, meetings, symposia (e.g., Beringia Days, Alaska Federation of Natives conference, etc.).

- Implement annual OASLC funding call to support outreach/education projects. (*see options to discuss below*)
- Support park research dissemination to scientific audiences through talks, posters and exhibit spaces at scientific conferences, such as the Alaska Marine Science Symposium, Alaska Forum for the Environment, Marine Mammal Conference, etc.
- Highlight park research results in strategic publications, both technical and non-technical.

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- *TC recommends Objective 1-2 and actions as drafted above.*
- *The TC recommends that OASLC provide information, products, and tools to support park I&E staff in their delivery of interpretive programs to park visitors and at general public venues. This provides more “bang for the buck” than OASLC paying for interpretation programs or staff. (Note: One TC member commented that OASLC should continue to support delivery of in-person programs about Alaska marine science at general public venues, such as at the Alaska SeaLife Center, Islands and Oceans Center, or other similar venues.)*

Objective 1-3: Support **education of youth audiences**, regarding coastal/marine science relevant to Alaska’s coastal parks.

Actions could include:

- Conduct teacher workshops focused on science relevant to park coastal and marine resources. Develop partnerships with other agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs) to increase and enhance these opportunities.
- Assist parks in working with rural schools in proximity to parks to provide education about coastal and marine resources (e.g., through village outreach, distance learning, etc.)

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- *TC recommends Objective 1-3 and actions as drafted above.*
- *TC largely supported the focus on rural schools in proximity to coastal parks, rather than school programs in Anchorage/more populated areas. Those who supported the focus on rural schools noted that educating youth who live near the parks (and may engage in subsistence activities) would create long-term stewards. Rural schools also generally have less access to science education than do the larger urban schools.*
- *Some TC members supported a “balance” of both rural and urban school programs – rather than stating that there would never be OASLC programming in larger urban schools.*

Objective 1-4: Seek and use **beneficial partnerships to increase outreach and education** about coastal/marine science relevant to coastal parks.

Actions could include:

- Assist parks in connecting with capable partners for communication, outreach and research. Let current and future needs and capabilities drive the partnerships.

- Assist parks in increasing partnerships and communication with tribal entities and villages.

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- *TC recommends Objective 1-4 and actions as drafted above.*
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Goal 2: Use of Coastal/Marine Science in Park Management - Increase and support the use of marine and coastal science to inform management of Alaska's coastal parks.

Objective 2-1: Provide park, I&M network and Alaska Region leadership and personnel with information about the current "state of the science" regarding coastal/marine resources and resource management issues, to inform in management and policy decisions related to coastal parks and networks.

Actions could include:

- Plan and support research symposia and workshops with partners (e.g. other government agencies and NGOs) to increase our understanding and abilities to educate and respond to cross cutting issues.
- Develop and maintain a coastal and marine primer for NPS staff summarizing the cross cutting issues and current research, threats and relevancy to park resources.
- Develop synthesis papers and literature reviews of cross cutting coastal/marine science issues as they relate to the region.
- Distribute resource briefs and web articles regarding current coastal and marine research projects and results to NPS staff.
- Support the OASLC Board in representing and advocating for work on marine and coastal issues with the Alaska Leadership Council (ALC).

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- *TC recommends Objective 2-1 and actions as drafted above.*
 - *TC sees the value of a regularly updated document (e.g., "coastal and marine primer") that summarizes relevant science for park service managers. However, caution that routine updates of this document could require a big effort on OASLC's part.*
 - *TC noted that under Objective 2-1, the primary audience is NPS personnel. Park staff may not need a full symposium or workshop to understand much of the coastal science needed to inform management or interpretation. OASLC would need to judge best format for education & training.*
 - *The Board should discuss the last "action" bullet (above) – including the extent to which it would have an advocacy role with the ALC on marine/coastal issues.*
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Goal 3: Coastal/Marine Scientific Research and Resource Inventory and Monitoring in Coastal Parks - Promote and facilitate scientific research, inventory and monitoring work to expand our knowledge of marine and coastal resources (natural and cultural) in Alaska's coastal parks.

Objective 3-1: Provide support for coastal/marine research, inventory and monitoring work in coastal parks.

Actions could include:

- Through the Technical Committee, work with coastal parks and I&M networks to identify and maintain a collective list of coastal and marine research questions related to park coastal and marine resources in the Alaska Region. Emphasize research questions that would assist in park management, and cross cutting issues affecting multiple parks. Focus OASLC funding call (for research support) on these issues.
- Implement annual OASLC funding call to fund research, inventory and monitoring projects. *(see options to discuss below)*
- Inform parks/networks of non-OASLC funding opportunities to support research, inventory and monitoring.
- Assist parks by providing or helping to connect them with technical support for research, inventory and monitoring.
- Assist parks in writing grant proposals that cover multiple parks.

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- *TC largely supported Objective 3-1 and the actions listed above.*
- *Most of the TC see value in having a collective list of research needs that can be used in communicating with partners, researchers, graduate students and others about research needs and opportunities – and can be shared across the coastal parks, so they can see what other parks are doing and identify opportunities for sharing and collaboration. (Note: One TC member commented that this should be a lower priority action, with the OASLC role limited to collating lists of needs that are developed and maintained by the parks.)*

Objective 3-2: Through beneficial partnerships with academia and other research entities, increase research, inventory and monitoring projects in coastal parks and/or that address coastal/marine science questions important to parks.

Actions could include:

- Facilitate and enhance communication between NPS and the broader research community, including academia and other research agencies (e.g, USGS, NOAA, AOOS, North Pacific Research Board).
- Use the list of priority research needs to attract researchers to conduct research in parks.
- Use the list of priority research needs to help college and graduate students develop successful proposals for research projects in parks.

- Engage or plan workshops or symposia with partners (e.g., other government agencies and NGOs) to increase our understanding and abilities to educate and respond to cross cutting issues.
- Explore the use of citizen science to increase basic knowledge of park resources.

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- *TC supported Objective 3-2 and the actions listed above.*
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Options for Annual OASLC Funding Call – *The TC considered and discussed the following options:*

Status Quo: As in years past, initiate funding call in the fall for small research and I&E projects (~\$10,000 - \$15,000). Parks can propose projects that relate to the coastal/marine resources and can be justified under the OASLC mission and/or the POPS plan.

Alternative #1: Use OASLC annual funding call primarily to leverage SCC-funded and/or externally funded projects. Projects will be determined approximately three years (or more) in advance following the SCC schedule. Use any balance to fund project(s) addressing cross cutting coastal/marine issues (perhaps focusing on only one or two at a time). Make these funding decisions two years ahead, to ease planning and contracting/agreement deadlines.

Alternative #2: Eliminate OASLC funding call completely, and instead fund project(s) addressing one or two cross cutting coastal/marine issues of relevance to multiple or all coastal parks in any given year, as determined by the Board.

Alternative #3 – Retain OASLC funding call but focus on just one or two cross cutting issues with a larger amount of funding (\$100,000+) devoted to each project, and preferably on projects involving multiple or all coastal parks.

TC RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

- *Status quo – One TC member preferred an annual OASLC funding call that would allow parks to compete for project funding for smaller (possibly park-specific) projects that meets the mission of OASLC, but may not be easily funded through other sources.*
- *Alternative #1 – The TC did not recommend Alternative #1, as they did not support requiring that the OASLC funding primarily be used to leverage SCC- or externally-funded projects. However, they agreed that leveraging other funds should be one of the criteria for project selection.*
- *Alternative #2 - The TC did not recommend Alternative #2, as they would like the annual funding call to be continued.*
- *Alternative #3 – Some TC members support Alternative #3, which would fund one or two larger projects each year to address multiple-park / cross cutting issues. They note that OASLC funding can move parks substantially forward on larger coastal/marine projects, and that the administrative burden is not worth it for smaller-budget projects. Others generally support this approach, but also recommend reserving some of the funding to: (1) leverage other grant*

sources, (2) meet unique project needs, (3) address sudden/urgent issues, and/or (4) fund a "value-added" element of an existing project.

- *Other comments from the TC discussion of the funding call:*
 - *The TC recommended implementing the OASLC funding call outside of the SCC process.*
 - *The TC recommended having clear criteria to rate proposals. Criteria could reward proposals that address collaboration across parks, cross cutting issues, leveraging, inclusion of effective O&E, etc.*
 - *Suggestion to fund across the networks (over time), to have good geographic distribution of the funding and the benefits.*
 - *Suggestion to have opportunity to address small/medium projects at the park level, to address unique needs that can't be funded through other sources.*